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SUBJECT: Working the Public and Press: Theme Based and Inter-Agency Coordinated

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¶1. Summary. During the first quarter, Embassy Nairobi emphasized theme-focused programming: from the overarching reform agenda Kenya must meet this year to many social issues where the media could play a constructive role. The Kenyan media face challenges both from within and without. After spending the last year responding to accusations of culpability in last winter's post-election violence, they are now threatened by an amended media bill (signed by the President on January 2) that, if enforced, could be used to curb media freedom sharply. PAS Nairobi generates unusually high media coverage of virtually all events and ties careful messaging that reflects Mission priorities to each event. Well-targeted media workshops sensitized journalists to social issues such as gender-based violence and HIV-AIDS. The Ambassador used interviews, public remarks at Embassy and other functions and set speeches to encourage the Kenyan public and political leadership to follow the path of reform they had agreed to in forging the coalition government. Coordination with other constituent agencies -- USAID, Dept. of Justice and Dept. of Defense -- earned large-scale media successes in health and social issues. End summary.

U.S. Election: Democracy by Example

¶2. The extraordinary level of interest in the U.S. presidential election gave the Embassy an unprecedented opportunity for outreach that crossed regional, religious and tribal boundaries and offered a lesson in peaceful political transition. The Public Affairs section orchestrated a mission-wide outreach program that reached over 6,000 students in more than thirty secondary schools and universities in Nairobi and other major Kenyan cities. Mission officers discussed rule of law, transparency, and pluralism with Kenyan youth, while the Ambassador delivered the same message through the electronic and print media in over thirty-five interviews between early September and Election Day.

¶3. The culminating event of the Embassy's election outreach was a morning-after election program at the Ambassador's residence, which attracted more than 2,000 Kenyans to watch the election returns live from 5:00 a.m. The Kenyan national media -- six TV and a dozen radio stations - turned out in force to broadcast live segments to complement their American feeds. FM Pamoja, a slum radio station and recent recipient of USAID technical assistance, beamed its own message of hope live from the event. The Ambassador gave twenty impromptu interviews that highlighted the rule of law at this final stage of the U.S. electoral cycle.

¶14. Kenya's controversial presidential election in 2007 and its violent aftermath forcibly brought to the surface the longstanding economic, social and tribal divisions within Kenya and heightened the need for political change. The brokering of a coalition government called for constitutional and institutional changes through the media of several independent commissions into the causes of the violence. Amid calls for implementation of the Waki and Kriegler reports, the media were variously implicated in generating the violence and lauded for their efforts to bring peace. The political leadership has been sluggish in responding, and some even considered the media's role in highlighting the post-election discussions and reporting on the Waki and Kriegler reports as unwelcome and disruptive. PAS reached out to the media to organize numerous radio talks and TV interviews for the Ambassador during this critical quarter to bolster Kenyan reform efforts.

Amending the Media Laws to Silence the Media?!

¶15. Despite heavy lobbying by the media owners and editors a resubmission of an amendment to the 1998 Media Bill, which had lapsed at the end of the Ninth Parliament before the 2007 elections, shocked the media and international communities with its retention of old restrictive clauses and its addition of an even greater degree of content regulation by a to-be-appointed government board. After increased efforts by the media to have the restrictive clauses deleted, Parliament still passed the Amendments bill (sine Quorum) principally to avenge itself on the press for having made them look foolish for not agreeing to pay taxes on their allowances. While

all agree that there is serious need for reform in the larger information and communications industries to facilitate e-commerce, regulate electronic records, and fast track changes in the ICT services sector, it was widely believed that the bill gave too much power to government agencies to control and regulate every aspect of communications, including editorial management of the media. The Embassy responded immediately after Parliament passed the bill on December 10 (ref a). In a December 12 press conference that was reported by all Kenyan media and international wire services, the Ambassador condemned the bill and urged continued unrestricted access to information.

¶16. International and local efforts proved futile as the President Kibaki signed the Bill on January 2, to the shock and dismay of the press, which headlined it as the "New Year Shocker," and vowed to fight back against what it termed a retrogressive move. The signing also surprised the coalition partners who had strongly suggested that the bill be returned to Parliament for redrafting on the contentious issues.

Against Gender-Based Violence

¶17. PAS, working together with USAID and the Department of Justice (DOJ), led the Embassy's 16-day campaign against Gender-Based Violence. In Kenya, almost half of women, regardless of status or ethnicity, are the victims of physical, verbal, psychological, or sexual violence. During the 16-day period, Embassy Nairobi launched a series of programs that reached out to a wide range of professionals working on combating gender-based violence. On November 24, PAS hosted a seminar for twenty journalists with U.S. legal experts in an effort to sensitize the media and encourage focused and responsible reporting. Two days later, the Embassy conducted a digital video conference connecting a Paris-based expert with Kenyan professionals to discuss prevention, best practices for education and outreach, treatment and recovery, and law enforcement.

On December 9, PAS and LEGATT worked together to co-sponsor a workshop aimed at assisting the Kenyatta and Nairobi hospitals in their efforts to create "one-stop" abuse reporting/assistance centers. This was part of the Women's Justice and Empowerment program, which is training police and prosecutors on best practices in the areas of police response, forensics, pre-trial measures, and victim and witness protection. On December 6-8, PAS placed an

Ambassadorial op-ed in the top five Kenyan dailies on the need to combat gender-based violence.

World AIDS Day: New Initiative

¶18. On December 3, PAS invited twenty journalists from Kenya's major media houses to a workshop on reporting HV-AIDS issues featuring PEPFAR Kenya Country Coordinator and Executive Director for the Partnership for an HIV-Free Generation. They discussed PEPFAR's accomplishments and future plans as well as social, cultural, and community aspects where the media could play an important role in reducing deep-rooted stigma often attached to being HIV-positive.

¶19. On December 5, PAS brought the major Kenya and international media outlets to a high-profile corporate launch of the "Partnership for an HIV-Free Generation," which unites the leadership, capabilities, resources, and assets of the public and private sectors to strengthen and expand youth-focused HIV prevention programs. The program is being piloted in Kenya.

Cultural Reporting

¶10. On December 11, the Embassy press section hosted a media workshop for a core group of 15 journalists from major Kenyan media, who cover cultural programming. Born out of the observation that the cultural section's rich programming (septel) yielded little high-standard coverage, the workshop was designed to offer a forum where the participants learned basic tools of analytic cultural reporting as well as ways to deal with editors who see little value in such reporting. A former AP bureau chief in Kenya led the journalists in a discussion about the challenges they face in reporting on cultural programs. Journalists were very appreciative of this first-ever workshop on cultural issues and to learn more about the Embassy's cultural programming from the CAO. Understanding that in Kenya, cultural reporting is not a career enhancing path for journalists, and that editors assign journalists to cultural events on an as-available basis, PAS plans to organize a series of follow-up workshops and reach out to the editors whenever possible about the need to nurture a cadre of cultural reporters.

Somalia and AFRICOM

¶11. October 29 and November 24 press conferences by A/S Frazer and AFRICOM General Ward respectively attracted a wide swathe of Kenyan and international media. Somalia, especially the piracy issue, dominated both events. At the same time, General Ward's visit gave an opportunity to detail AFRICOM's objectives and future plans for both local and international audiences.

Ambassador's Peace Messages

¶12. PAS arranged media coverage for the Ambassador's many trips throughout Kenya during this quarter. On November 15, the Ambassador participated in the peace run in Kapenguria in the Western district, sponsored by the world-famous marathoner Tegla Laroupe. Her foundation, a recipient of USAID and public affairs grants, has been working on peace building in her native district which has been ravaged by inter-tribal armed conflict. On November 19, the Ambassador visited the Dadaab refugee camps to express appreciation for Kenya's continued role in providing support to asylum seekers fleeing Somalia and to review the current conditions in the camp. Following the camp visit, the Ambassador dedicated a kindergarten in Dadaab, a project completed by the Combined Joint Task Force - Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA). On November 20, the Ambassador took a group of local MPs and the Minister of Northern Kenya to Marsabit in the northern tip of Kenya to participate in another peace initiative. The Horn of Africa Development Initiative (HODI), under the slogan of "shoot to score not to kill," brought a group of children from different tribes to a soccer game. Even

though parents of the children may not interact together because of the centuries of tribal conflict, their children would serve as peace ambassadors in the community. The Ambassador's message on peace in each event reached audiences throughout Kenya via TV, radio and print coverage.

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